

Harry Mitchell, U.S. Congressman
[Fountain Hills Times](#)

The most important issue we face in Arizona and across the country is strengthening our economy and creating jobs. Vital keys to achieving these goals include reining in government spending and reducing the national debt.

President Obama recently put forth a plan to use some of the leftover funds from the bank bailout, also known as the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, for additional domestic projects. When the President released the plan, I wrote to him and urged him to instead use these funds to pay down the \$1.4 billion budget deficit as opposed to additional spending.

I have also co-sponsored the Repaying the American Taxpayer Act, which would require that revenue generated from TARP be used to pay down the national debt.

In 2008, President Bush asked Congress to approve TARP funding to stave off a catastrophic financial collapse that could have led to another Great Depression. The federal government had to borrow money to pay for TARP. Thankfully, that immediate emergency has now passed. While we still have a long way to go to get our economy where we would like it to be, things are significantly more stable than they were a year ago. To the extent that there are any TARP funds remaining, I believe we should use them to reduce the deficit, not increase spending.

Late last year, an amendment to require that the TARP funds be used to pay down the deficit came to the floor of the House of Representatives for a vote. I supported it. Despite my support, the amendment, which was sponsored by Republican Rep. Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, failed.

I also voted against a recent bill that would have raised the debt ceiling and allowed the government to borrow more money for additional spending. The country can no longer afford the reckless borrow and spend practices that has taken place under both parties. Unfortunately, the bill narrowly passed the House by four votes.

It's time Washington learns a lesson or two from Arizona families that are finding ways to balance their budgets by cutting spending they simply cannot afford - or from small business owners who have been forced to become more efficient and to do more with less.

We need a serious, bipartisan effort to reduce spending, reduce the deficit and retain key tax cuts that encourage investment and foster economic growth. What we don't need is more partisan bickering. Democrats and Republicans need to work on solutions that will lift our country up, get folks back to work and get our fiscal house in order.

As former mayor and state senator, I've never voted for a budget that wasn't balanced, and have voted against every Democratic budget since being elected to Congress. It is my hope to see real fiscal restraint when the budget is presented, including spending cuts and the extension of key middle-class tax cuts.